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MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

RICHMOND, Va., April 16, 1863.

To the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES :

Having approved and signed a bill, which originated in your body, entitled, "an act to allow minors to hold commissions in the army," I deem it due to many meritorious officers in the service to make a short explanation.

The bill, in my opinion, is only declaratory of the pre-existing law. No prohibition existed, prior to its passage, against the issue of commissions either in the permanent or provisional army to persons under twenty-one years of age. Many of the commissioned officers of the provisional army have obtained high rank by election and promotion, before attaining the age of twenty-one years. The only objection, therefore, that I could entertain to signing the bill in question, was based on the apprehension that the approval of an act allowing commissions to be issued to minors "from and after the passage of the act," might imply that the commissions heretofore issued to minors are invalid.

It seemed, however, more proper to sign the act which in itself was unobjectionable, and to address to you this explanation, which will obviate, it is believed, the only ill consequence that could flow from the passage of the law.

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

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